



Get the hang of something

to learn to do something well

- Idioms are actually fun once you **get the hang of them**.
- Soon, you will **get the hang of the language** and you will be able to express yourself very well.

Get the picture

to understand a situation

- A: Tom, can I borrow some money?
B: I'm afraid I can't lend you any money. I lost my job and I'm behind on rent already.
A: Say no more, I **get the picture**.
- I get, I get, I **get the picture**, I know. I see what's going on here, okay?

Get the wrong end of the stick Get hold of the wrong end of the stick

to misunderstand something

- That's not what I meant. You **got the wrong end of the stick**, Jack. I didn't mean to insult you.
- So, you see how easily people could **get the wrong end of the stick** from Jesus' teaching here.



Get your head around something

to start to understand something

- At first people laughed at him because they couldn't **get their head around what he was trying to tell them.**
- And then you say something I can't quite **get my head around.**
- I just couldn't **get my head around it.**

Go in one ear and out the other

to not pay attention to what's being said

- I've told him so many times. It's just **goes in one ear and out the other.**
- It's almost like it **goes in one ear and out the other** and we go back into automatic pilot.

A gray area

not clear, falls between two categories

- Downloading music from the internet has always been **a gray area.**
- I think that the message from the statement yesterday was extremely clear. I don't think it was **a gray area**; It was pretty black and white.



Not have a clue

*to not know anything about something
Or to have no idea what to do about something*

- I **don't have a clue** what I'm supposed to be doing.

Put two and two together

to correctly guess the truth about something from the information that you have

- I **put two and two together** and realized that their relationship was over.
- So, she **put two and two together**, and she realized that her daughter was pregnant.

Put two and two together and make five

to think something is more exciting than it really is

- A: How did she think you were in love with her?
B: I was just being nice to her but clearly, she had **put two and two together and made five**.

Read between the lines

to understand the real meaning of something even though it was not mentioned

- She said she could afford buying a new house, but **reading between the lines** I don't think she has enough money.
- Read between the lines, Theo. **Read between the lines!**



Jump to conclusions

to guess and you quickly make decisions about something you don't have enough information about it

- Forgive me. I thought you were married. I shouldn't **jump to conclusions**.
- Let me explain first as I don't want you to **jump to the conclusion** that this is your fault.
- Doctors are always careful not to **leap to conclusions**. = jump
- Take a deep breath. Don't **jump to a conclusion**. You don't know what she's doing on her iPhone. So just relax. Take it easy.

Up to speed

*You always know every new information
Or You're staying up to date*

- A: Why do you always watch news channels?
B: Because I'm trying to be **up to speed** with what's going on in the world.
- This is your first day back to work after a long vacation, I think I should bring you **up to speed** on everything that happened while you were away.

Take something on board

to take all the information in your head, think about them and understand them

- I listened to them, **took their comments on board**, and then made a decision.

Take something on board = Get your head around something



Idiom Podium

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Level 3

Exercise 1

Complete the sentences with the words in the boxes.

ear

clue

hang

picture

stick

area

1. I soon began to get the ____ of the new filing system.
2. Anna doesn't have a ____ how to talk to children.
3. The difference between telling a lie and not telling the whole truth is a gray ____.
4. I thought she was paying for dinner but I must have got the wrong end of the ____.
5. Brad tried to remember the directions but they seemed to have gone in one ____ and out the other.
6. The inspector spent a few minutes with the victim and soon began to get the ____.

Exercise 2

Match sentence halves 1–6 with A–F to make complete sentences.

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- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. We saw them together in the restaurant and it was so easy to... | A. ...read between the lines. |
| 2. I've told them I'm a vegetarian many times but they just don't... | B. ...take it on board. |
| 3. I always pay attention, and that's why I'm always able to... | C. ...had put two and two together and made five. |
| 4. I've learnt a lot about the new strategy and I'll run a training day to... | D. ...Jump to conclusions. |
| 5. Why people are scared of new ideas is something I've never been able to... | E. ...get my head around. |
| 6. Unfortunately, the children were disappointed; they... | F. ...bring you all up to speed. |

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Exercise 3

Complete the sentences. Choose the best answers.

1. Then you click 'save' and move the file to here. Do you **read between the lines** / **get the picture** / **put two and two together**?
2. It's going to take me a couple of days to get **up to speed** / **the picture** / **the wrong end of the stick** with the new project.
3. This is a very difficult exercise. I just can't **jump to conclusions** / **go in one ear and out the other** / **get my head round it**.
4. Don't worry. You'll soon **get the hang of it** / **jump to conclusions** / **get the wrong end of the stick**.
5. Listen to all the evidence and don't **take it on board** / **jump to conclusions** / **get your head around it**.
6. Adam shook his head; he didn't **put two and two together** / **read between the lines** / **have a clue** how to fix this.

Exercise 4

Replace the underlined words with the correct idioms in the boxes.

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get hold of the wrong end of the stick	get the hang of it	get the picture
go in one ear and out the other	haven't got a clue	read between the lines

1. You don't have to explain it anymore. I understand the situation.
2. He doesn't listen carefully, and tends to misunderstand.
3. I don't think I'll be to do the accounts. I know nothing about book keeping.
4. They haven't actually said anything is wrong, but I can sense it.
5. It's difficulty at first, but after a bit of practice, you learn how to do it.
6. You have to repeat everything to them. Whatever you say will be forgotten immediately afterwards!

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The Answer

Exercise 1

1. hang
2. clue
3. area
4. stick
5. ear
6. picture

Exercise 2

1. D
2. B
3. A
4. F
5. E
6. C

Exercise 3

1. get the picture
2. up to speed
3. get my head round it
4. get the hang of it
5. jump to conclusions
6. have a clue

Exercise 4

1. get the picture
2. get hold of the wrong end of the stick
3. haven't got a clue
4. read between the lines
5. get the hang of it
6. go in one ear and out the other



Bear/Keep something in mind

to remember something that is very important

- **Keep in mind** that some places are more dangerous than others for women travelling alone.

Cross your mind

if something crosses your mind, you suddenly think of it

- It **crossed my mind** that she might be lying about her age.
- Going to college never **crossed her mind** as she knew how expensive it is.

Food for thought

if you give someone food for thought, you make them think hard

- He knows so much that listening to him always gives me **food for thought**.

A gut feeling

a feeling or a reaction that happens fast without reasons

- Jack had **a gut feeling** that Sarah was lying.

We can also say "**a gut feeling, a gut instinct, a gut reaction**" they're all the same.

Lose the plot

if someone loses the plot, they become confused or crazy or no longer know how to deal with a situation

- Vicky works so many hours that she started **losing the plot**. She is making mistakes and keeps falling asleep on the job.

Memory and mind



Miles away

if someone is miles away, they are completely unaware of what is happening because they are thinking deeply about something else

- You didn't hear a word I said, did you? You were **miles away**.

A mind like a sieve

if you have a mind like a sieve or a brain like a sieve, you have a bad memory and often forget things

- He lost his keys again. He's got **a mind like a sieve**.

Fill in the blanks.

Fortunately, she knew that he had



Memory and mind



Off the top of your head

if you comment on something off the top of your head, what you are about to say is not thought of previously. You haven't thought of it before saying it and it might not be correct

- A: How much does a house in Cairo cost?
B: **Off the top of my head**, I'd say about 50,000\$.

Off your head

very strange or foolish

- You must be **off your head** to continue living in this very expensive city after losing your job.

On the tip of your tongue

if a comment or a question is on the tip of your tongue, you really want to say it or ask it, but you decide not to say it

or

if a word or a name or an answer is on the tip of your tongue, you know it and you can almost remember it but you just don't

- It was **on the tip of my tongue** to tell her that I saw him with another girl, but I said nothing.
- Do you remember that guy who gave us the tickets? oh, what was his name? Oh, it's **on the tip of my tongue**! That's annoying, why can't I remember his name?

Memory and mind



Out of your mind

if you say that someone is out of their mind, you mean that they are very stupid

- You spent five hundred dollars on a jacket! Are you **out of your mind**?

Going/Out of your mind with... = to feel something strongly

if you say that someone is out of their mind with worry, you mean that they are extremely worried

- She's **out of her mind** with worry, she hasn't seen her husband in days.
- She's **going of her mind** with worry, she hasn't seen her husband in days.

Rack your brain

to think very hard about something or try very hard to remember it

- They asked me for fresh ideas, so I **racked my brain** for the whole day.
- Bob **racked his brain** trying to remember where he had put his keys.

We can also say "**rack your brains**" the plural form. Both are ok and widely used.

Ring a bell

if something rings a bell, it is slightly familiar to you and you know you have heard it before, but you don't remember it fully

- The name **rings a bell** but I can't remember where I've heard it.

Memory and mind



Idiom Podium

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Level 3

Exercise 1

Complete the sentences with the words in the boxes. Some of the sentences have more than one answer.

head mind brain thought brains

1. Do you have the memory of an elephant or a _____ like a sieve?
2. You are mad. Totally, completely and utterly off your _____.
3. He was behaving as if he was out of his _____.
4. In the previous lessons, I already have given you plenty of food for _____.
5. Off the top of your _____, what do you know about Vitamin C?
6. Rack your _____ and tell me everything you know about him.

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Exercise 2

Decide if the following sentences are true (✓) or false (✗).

1. If something crosses your mind, you forget about it.
2. If something rings a bell, it reminds you of something.
3. If you have a gut reaction to something, you have spent a long time thinking about it.
4. If you say something off the top of your head, you are very strange and dangerous.
5. If something is food for thought, it makes you think.
6. If you are racking your brain, you aren't thinking very hard.

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Level 3

Exercise 3

Choose the best answer to complete the sentences.

1. Do you know anyone called Frascati? – Well the name _____.
a) racks my brains b) rings a bell c) is miles away
2. Dr Barth, what is the greatest single thought that ever _____?
a) rang a bell b) racked your brains c) crossed your mind
3. You don't know anyone else who might be free? – Not _____, no.
a) on the tip of my tongue b) crossing my mind c) off the top of my head
4. I'm just trying to remember his name; it's _____.
a) racking my brains b) on the tip of my tongue c) crossing my mind
5. Did you ask me a question? I'm sorry, I was _____.
a) miles away b) out of my mind c) ringing a bell
6. Someone mentioned this point recently and I'm _____ to think who it was.
a) out of my mind b) racking my brains c) bearing it in mind

Exercise 4

Correct the idioms in these sentences.

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1. Business has been very bad and the management seem to have **racked the plot**.
2. You can withdraw money at other banks but **bear in thought** that they might charge a handling fee.
3. You are **off your mind** if you think I'll help you commit a crime!
4. **Off the top of his mind**, he couldn't think of an excuse she would believe.
5. The after-dinner speaker provided us with plenty of **thought food**.
6. Her name was **on the top of my tongue**, but I just couldn't get it.
7. Personally, I trust my **gut action** to tell me when I'm right.
8. It **crossed my head** that I hadn't heard the children for a while.

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The Answer

Exercise 1

1. brain
2. head
3. mind
4. thought
5. head
6. brains

Exercise 2

1. false
2. true
3. false
4. false
5. true
6. false

Exercise 3

1. rings a bell
2. crossed your mind
3. off the top of my head
4. on the tip of my tongue
5. miles away
6. racking my brains

Exercise 4

1. lost the plot
2. bear in mind
3. out of your mind
4. Off the top of his head
5. food for thought
6. on the tip of my tongue
7. gut reaction
8. crossed my mind



At cross purposes

if two people are at cross purposes, they think they are talking about or trying to do the same thing but in fact they are talking about or trying to do different things

- He realized that they have been talking **at cross purposes**. They weren't offering him the job.
- Because that's working **at cross purposes**, that's absolutely wrong!

Come out of your shell

to become less shy and more confident

- Mary used to be very shy, but I think she has **come out of her shell**.
- It's time for you to **come out of that shell**.
- She's so confident now. I think the job has **brought her out of her shell**.

Find common ground

to come to an agreement on something

- The leaders of the two countries met to **find common ground**.
- Try to **find common ground** and actually move solutions forward.

Communicating



From the horse's mouth

if you get a piece of information from the horse's mouth, you get it directly from someone who is involved and knows the most about it

- A: Did you know that Michelle quit?
B: I don't believe it. I will go ask her and hear it straight **from the horse's mouth**.
- So, you can say, right **from the horse's mouth**, right from Google, no one can guarantee a number one ranking.

Get your (wires/lines) crossed

to have a misunderstanding or miscommunication with someone else

- I'm sorry I'm late, I thought we were getting here at 8—we must have **gotten our lines crossed**.
- This is where we kind of **get our wires crossed**.

Go off (on/at) a tangent

if someone goes off at a tangent, they start saying or doing something that is not directly connected with what they were saying or doing before

- Our teacher usually **goes off on a tangent** and starts talking about something totally unrelated to the book.
- I think I'm gonna **go off on a tangent** if that's all right.

Communicating



Hear something (through/on) the grapevine

to hear something from someone who has heard it from someone who has heard it from someone, basically, gossip

- I **heard on the grapevine** that Stacy and Mark are getting a divorce.
 - She **heard through the grapevine** that he was looking for a job.
-

In black and white

if you say that something is in black and white, you mean that you have proof, a written proof of it

- We have a clear rule **in black and white** that this action is illegal.
 - I have it **in black and white** that I can take three weeks of vacation each year.
 - It was there, **in black and white**. I did it. I wrote it.
-

In the loop

a part of a group who have information about a specific thing

- Not many people knew what was going on but the president was certainly **in the loop**.
 - If you want to be **in the loop** all the time, you can say, send me everything.
-

Communicating



Keep someone posted

if you keep someone posted, you continue giving them all the latest information about a situation

- She made me promise to **keep her posted** on everything while she was in London.
- **Keep me posted** on everything and best of luck to you

Keep someone posted = **keep someone in the loop** about something

Let the cat out of the bag

to disclose a secret, often by mistake

- How did she know about it? Who **let the cat out of the bag**?
- I know you don't want to **let the cat out of the bag** before the speech.

Put someone in the picture

if you put someone in the picture, you tell them about something they need to know about

- Before you start working, let me **put you in the picture** and tell you how this office works.
- Just make sure you **put the boss in the picture** about the progress of this project. He needs to know every detail.
- Come to life. **Put yourself in the picture.**

Communicating



Spill the beans

to reveal a secret

- He was afraid that I was going to **spill the beans** to the police.
- We planned a surprise party for him, but Kate accidentally **spilled the beans** to him at work.

Touch base

if you touch base with someone, you contact them and you get in touch after a long time

- I was just calling to **touch base** since I haven't heard from you for a long time.
- I will ask my friend to **touch base** with you and see if he could help.

to contact or get in touch with someone generally

- I will ask my friend to **touch base** with you and see if he could help.

Fill in the blanks.

Sometimes, even your friends



Communicating



Sometimes, even your friends **let the cat out of the bag**.



Exercise 1

Match phrases 1–8 with A–H to make idioms from this unit.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. go off at | A. the beg |
| 2. get your wires | B. base |
| 3. to be | C. a tangent |
| 4. keep someone | D. the beans |
| 5. spill | E. the picture |
| 6. touch | F. posted |
| 7. let the cat out of | G. at cross purposes |
| 8. put someone in | H. crossed |

Exercise 2

Complete the sentences with the words in the boxes. Some of the sentences have more than one answer.

out

from

at

in

off

on

1. Keep me _____ the loop, will you?



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Level 3

out

from

at

in

off

on

2. I wish she wouldn't keep going off ____ a tangent.
3. We heard a rumor ____ the grapevine.
4. Let me put you ____ the picture.
5. I heard all this straight ____ the horse's mouth.
6. I think they were arguing ____ cross purposes there.
7. She promised me she wouldn't let the cat ____ of the bag.
8. She really came ____ of her shell when the signing started.

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Exercise 3

Reorder the phrases to make sentences.

1. true / it must be / here **in black and white** / because it's
2. as you develop / keep me / the idea / **in the loop**
3. every week to / **touch base** / we meet / have lunch and
4. was moving / that the discussion / **off on a tangent** / I thought
5. she was doing / she asked him / on how / **to keep her posted**
6. paid / the office cleaner to / the newspaper reporter / **spill the beans**
7. the issue of / **find common ground** on / they managed to / rates of pay
8. going away / the family agreed that / would **bring him out of his shell** / to university

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Exercise 4

Make sentences 1-6 less formal. Replace the underlined words with the correct idioms A-F.

1. I haven't heard any news yet, but I'll inform you.
2. It was meant to be a surprise, but someone gave the secret away.
3. I heard a rumor that Penny and Alan are getting married.
4. It must be true. I heard it from a reliable source.
5. Let's meet up next week just to make contact again.
6. They support different teams but they agreed with each other when someone mentioned the off-side rule.

A. **let the cat out of the bag**

B. **heard on the grapevine**

C. **keep you posted**

D. **found common ground**

E. **heard it straight from the horse's mouth**

F. **touch base**

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The Answer

Exercise 1

1. C - 2. H - 3. G - 4. F
5. D - 6. B - 7. A - 8. E

Exercise 3

1. It must be true because it's here **in black and white**.
2. Keep me **in the loop** as you develop the idea.
3. We meet every week to have lunch and **touch base**.
4. I thought that the discussion was moving **off on a tangent**.
5. She asked him **to keep her posted** on how she was doing.
6. The newspaper reporter paid the office cleaner to **spill the beans**.
7. They managed to **find common ground** on the issue of rates of pay.
8. The family agreed that going away to university would **bring him out of his shell**.

Exercise 2

1. **in** the loop
2. going off **at** a tangent
3. heard a rumor **on** the grapevine
4. put you **in** the picture
5. **from** the horse's mouth
6. **at** cross purposes
7. let the cat **out** of the bag
8. came **out** of her shell

Exercise 4

1. C - 2. A - 3. B - 4. E
5. F - 6. D



The bottom line

the most important fact about what you are discussing

- Well, I think **the bottom line** is if you love somebody, you will accept them nomatter what.
- **The bottom line** is, is that we don't have a stronger partner anywhere in the world than the United Kingdom.
- **The bottom line** is your son is doing the right thing.

Cross that bridge when you come to it

*if you say "I will **cross that bridge when I come to it**" you mean that you will deal with this problem when it happens, or if it happens.*

- A: Don't spend all your savings now. What are you going to do next year?
B: I will **cross that bridge when I come to it**.
- A: You can't make me talk to you.
B: No, I can't, but the police can.
A: Fine, I **will cross that bridge when I come to it**.

Cut to the chase

if someone cuts to the chase, they start talking or dealing with the important stuff instead of wasting time with less important things

- You know what? I've had enough of this, let's just **cut to the chase**.
- I will **cut to the chase** - we just don't have enough money for the project.
- Here's the problem with self-help books and seminars: they don't **cut to the chase**.

Priorities and decisions



The icing on the cake

if you describe something as the icing on the cake, you mean that it is an extra good thing that makes a good situation even better

- He was already happy with his salary, **the icing on the cake** came when he received a large bonus.

something bad added which made a bad situation worse

- I lost my job today and the fact that my car broke down was **the icing on the cake**.

In two minds

if you are in two minds about something, you are not able to reach a decision or opinion about something

- I'm **in two minds** about going to college. On one hand, it's required for most of the jobs, but on the other, it is very expensive.
- It shows you that everybody can be **two minds** about this.

Make a mountain out of a molehill

to talk or complain about small, unimportant problems as if it is important and serious

- Don't **make a mountain out of a molehill**, it's really not a big deal.

Priorities and decisions



On the back burner

if there is something that needs high fire, they put it on the front burners but anything else that can wait or they are not in a hurry to finish

- Linda put her career **on the back burner** after marrying a famous rich man.

Fill in the blanks.

The nurse thought Jim was making



Priorities and decisions



The nurse thought Jim was making **a mountain of a molehill**.



Play it by ear

to deal with things as they happen, you don't make plans for the future

- He never prepared his speeches, he always **played things by ear**.
- I don't know how to do it or what I'm doing, I'm just going to **play it by ear** and see how well it goes.

Sit on the fence

to refuse to give an opinion about something

- You can't **sit on the fence** any longer—you need to choose who of these two we need to fire.
- These people **sit on the fence** because they don't know which way to go.

Priorities and decisions



Split hairs

if someone splits hairs, they argue about very small details. Or they try to find differences between things which are really very similar

- Don't **split hairs**, I don't care whether he is 24 or 25.
- You lay out all the pros, the cons, you **split the hairs**, you go through every shade of gray.

Stick to your guns

to refuse to change your decision or opinion about something, even though other people are trying to tell you that you are wrong

- Once you tell your children to do something, **stick to your guns** even if they get upset.
- You should **stick to your guns** and focus on the people that matter to you.

Take a back seat

to allow other people to have the power or responsibility

- If you know anybody else who can manage this company, I will be happy to **take a back seat**.
- I **take a back seat** to nobody

The tip of the iceberg

if something is the tip of the iceberg, it is a small part of a very large problem

- We get about 2,000 complaints every year and that's just **the tip of the iceberg**.

Up in the air

if an important decision or plan is up in the air, that means, it hasn't been decided yet

- I was supposed to get a promotion this week but things are still **up in the air** because my boss is out of town.

Priorities and decisions



Exercise 1

Complete the sentences with the words in the boxes.

by

of

to

in

on

1. We're just going to play it ____ ear.
2. This is just the tip ____ the iceberg.
3. let's put that decision ____ the back burner for now.
4. I'm ____ two minds about spending all that money at once.
5. He stuck ____ his guns in spite of their grumbling.
6. We'll cross that bridge when we come ____ it.

Exercise 2

Match sentence halves 1-6 with A-F to make complete sentences.

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- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. The bottom line is simply | A. and cut straight to the chase. |
| 2. We're going to play it by ear | B. but let's not make a mountain out of a molehill. |
| 3. You will have to stop sitting on the fence | C. but I won't split hairs. |
| 4. The answer should have a capital letter | D. and see how the next 24 hours go. |
| 5. Let's skip the introductions | E. that business is about money. |
| 6. We can't ignore this issue | F. and show where your loyalty lies. |

Exercise 3

Choose the best answer to complete the sentences.

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1. 'They really believe in what I do and they want to enable me to do it.' She went on to explain her success: 'I'm very good, that's ____.'
- a) the bottom line b) the tip of the iceberg c) the back burner



2. Then he became really ill and had to put all his plans _____.
a) up in the air b) on the fence c) on the back burner
3. 'What if you need another operation after this one?' – I'll _____.
a) make a mountain out of a molehill b) cross that bridge when I come to it c) stick to my guns
4. The President accused his critics of being oversensitive and of _____.
a) playing it by ear b) cutting to the chase c) making a mountain out of a molehill
5. For four hours of questioning, Grommek _____, but by five o'clock he had changed his story.
a) played it by ear b) cut to the chase c) stuck to his guns
6. She was _____ about whether or not to turn back.
a) splitting hairs b) in two minds c) up in the air

Exercise 4

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Correct the idioms in these sentences.

1. The dates for the summit meeting are still **up on the fence** at the moment.
2. The police say that these numbers could just be the **top of the iceberg**.
3. He'll do what he can to make you change your mind, but you **stick on the back burner**.
4. I don't want to retire when I'm sixty years old but I'll **cut to the bridge** when I come to it.
5. She forgot her notes so she had to **play it by air** at the interview.
6. There just isn't any more money and that **sits on the bottom line**.
7. After he retires, Ken will be able to **sit in the back seat** in the family business.
8. I was proud to work for Ferrari, and to drive their fantastic cars was **the icing in the cake**.

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Exercise 5

Complete the sentences with idioms in this unit, changing the verb forms if necessary.

1. I was so pleased just to have passed the exam; coming first was _____.
2. I can't really say too much about who else I'm going to be working with at the moment because it's all very much _____ and anything could happen.
3. I never really had a plan for my life. I just _____. Neither of us is very ambitious and we have enough money.
4. She introduced herself and then said 'I'll _____: I have all the evidence I need to put you in prison for the next ten years.'
5. This is a misleading figure. There will be many hidden costs that we will discover as this project develops. I suggest that £1.4 billion is only _____.
6. Yet on this key issue, the government has chosen to _____, saying that schools must decide for themselves.

12

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The Answer

Exercise 1

1. **by**
2. **of**
3. **on**
4. **in**
5. **to**
6. **to**

Exercise 2

1. **E**
2. **D**
3. **F**
4. **C**
5. **A**
6. **B**

Exercise 3

1. **the bottom line**
2. **on the back burner**
3. **cross that bridge when I come to it**
4. **making a mountain out of a molehill**
5. **stuck to his guns**
6. **in two minds**

Exercise 4

1. **up in the air**
2. **tip of the iceberg**
3. **stick to your guns**
4. **cross that bridge**
5. **play it by ear**
6. **is the bottom line**
7. **sit on a back seat**
8. **the icing on the cake**

Exercise 5

1. **the icing on the cake**
2. **up in the air**
3. **play it by ear**
4. **cut to the chase**
5. **the tip of the iceberg**
6. **sit on the fence**



Break the ice

if a person, event or activity breaks the ice, they make people feel more relaxed and comfortable in a social situation

- Teachers usually **break the ice** with new classes by some fun activities.
- This presentation, with a few jokes, was a good **ice-breaker**.
- Do **ice-breakers** in your class. Use a discussion topic as an ice breaker.

*An **icebreaker** is the activity that is used to break the ice*

Get off on the wrong foot

to start a relationship or an activity badly

- We **got off on the wrong foot** the first time we met, but she is my best friend now.
- I think we **got off on the wrong foot** if we ask ourselves how can we arrange things.

Get on like a house on fire

if two people get on like a house on fire, they quickly become close friends

- I only had one conversation with her, and we **got on like a house on fire**.

Get on someone's nerves

if someone or something gets on your nerves, they make you very annoyed

- She talks all the time and it **gets on my nerves**.
- But I am a truth teller. That's why they **get on my nerves**. Because I've got the truth and the don't.

Relationships



Give someone the cold shoulder

if someone gives you the cold shoulder, they stop being friendly to you, they start ignoring you, on purpose

- A: What's wrong with Kate? She's been **giving me the cold shoulder** the whole day.
B: She thinks you told the boss that she came late.
- Our neighbors **give us the cold shoulder**. Our parents don't approve of our lifestyles.

Go back a long way / Go way back

to have been friends for a very long time

- Don't worry about Tom, I will talk to him. He and I **go back a long way**.
- You know, your mother and I **go way back**.

Fill in the blanks.

Sometimes unlikely friends can



Relationships



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Sometimes unlikely friends can **get on like a house on fire**.



Hit it off

if two people hit it off when they first meet, they like each other and get on well together

- I had to leave the company because my boss was awful, we never really **hit it off**.
- Sarah, meet Jane, I think you two will **hit it off**.
- Yeah, I thought you guys might **hit it off**.

Hit it off = Get on like a house on fire

Sparks fly

if sparks fly between people, they get angry with each other and argue

- The two managers have different plans for the business so, **sparks fly** whenever they are in a meeting together.

Your own flesh and blood

if someone is your own flesh and blood, they are a member of your family

- You are **my own flesh and blood**; how could you spill the beans to the cops?

Relationships



Leave someone in the lurch

to leave someone without assistance, without help when they are in a difficult situation

- My secretary **left me in the lurch** last month and I haven't found a replacement yet.
- But I thought well I can't **leave Kristin in the lurch**, but I was umm. What am I supposed to sing?

On the rocks

if a relationship is on the rocks, it has many difficulties and is likely to end

- I heard on the grapevine that their relationship is **on the rocks**.
- So, people will come up to me every show, lots of people, and tell me their marriage is **on the rocks**.

On the same wavelength

if two people are on the same wavelength, they understand each other very well because they share the same interests and opinions

- A: How does Indian food sound tonight?
B: That's what I was going to suggest! We must be **on the same wavelength**.
- You have to get everybody **on the same wavelength** as you.

Save face

to do something so that people continue to respect you usually after an embarrassing situation

- I was late to the meeting but I tried to **save face** by blaming it on traffic.
- Sometimes they lie to improve their image or **save face**, maybe to cover up an accident.

Relationships



Exercise 1

Look at the sentences below. Which three idioms have the same meaning? Which idiom has the opposite meaning to these three?

1. Everyone around the table remained silent and I tried to think of a way of **breaking the ice**.
2. It's strange that her two ex-husbands **get on like a house on fire**!
3. Oh yes, we **go back a long way** – we went to nursery school together.
4. I'm afraid we got **off on the wrong foot** because I got her name wrong.
5. They are definitely **on the same wavelength** – both passionate about green politics.
6. We didn't really **hit it off** – we just aren't interested in the same things.

Exercise 2

Match sentence halves 1–8 with A–H to make complete sentences.

12

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Whenever his mother was in the room, | A. definitely on the rocks. |
| 2. It's his stupid loud voice | B. I was aware of sparks flying. |
| 3. Their business partnership was now | C. treated them like dirt. |
| 4. She took his keys and his coat | D. our own flesh and blood. |
| 5. They left because the manager | E. and left him in the lurch. |
| 6. He was rude to her so she's decided that in future | F. that gets on my nerves. |
| 7. We care about you because you are | G. to help them save face. |
| 8. We pretended not to notice them leave, | H. she'll give him the cold shoulder. |

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Exercise 3

Choose the best answer to complete the sentences.

- You have started _____ by arriving late for our appointment.
a) to save face b) on the same wavelength c) off on the wrong foot
- He's highly educated and she's got no qualifications at all, but they managed to _____.
a) get off on the wrong foot b) hit it off c) go back a long way
- Mr. Sen invited them all to dinner at his house to _____.
a) get off on the wrong foot b) got on like a house on fire c) break the ice
- As soon as the prisoners arrive, the guards begin to _____.
a) treat them like dirt b) get off on the wrong foot c) leave them in the lurch
- Luca's personal assistant quit suddenly and _____ so I'm doing some typing for him.
a) left him in the lurch b) treated him like dirt c) got the cold shoulder
- They argue all the time now. There's no doubt that their marriage is _____.
a) on fire b) on the rocks c) their own flesh and blood

Exercise 4

Correct the idioms in these sentences.

12

- When I saw her at the part, she just **gave me the cold hands**.
- We used to argue a lot, but now we're getting on like a house **in the lurch**.
- We go back **on the rocks**. We met when we were just children.
- As soon as they met, they **hit it on**.



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5. I find him a bit irritating. He really **gets on my sparks**.
6. We understand each other well. We're **on the same foot**.

12

Exercise 5

Replace the underlined words with idioms from this unit in the correct form.

1. We get on well, but we have different views on politics. As soon as we start talking about politics, we have an argument – so we tend to avoid the subject.
2. Don't worry – I promised I would help you, and I won't abandon you.
3. Unfortunately, when we first met, we had a disagreement which ruined our relationship. But I'm sure that next time we meet, we can become friends.
4. I tried to say something funny just to ease the tension – but I don't think she found it very amusing.

8

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The Answer

Exercise 1

The three idioms that have the same meaning are:

- B. **get on like a house on fire**
- E. **on the same wavelength**
- F. **hit it off**

The idiom that has the opposite meaning to these three is:

- D. **got off on the wrong foot**

Exercise 2

- 1. **B**
- 2. **F**
- 3. **A**
- 4. **E**
- 5. **C**
- 6. **H**
- 7. **D**
- 8. **G**

Exercise 3

- 1. **c**
- 2. **b**
- 3. **c**
- 4. **a**
- 5. **a**
- 6. **b**

Exercise 4

- 1. gave me the cold **shoulder**
- 2. getting on like a house **on fire**
- 3. go back **a long way**
- 4. hit it **off**
- 5. gets on my **nerves**
- 6. on the same **wavelength**

Exercise 5

- 1. **sparks fly**
- 2. **leave you in the lurch**
- 3. **got off on the wrong foot**
- 4. **break the ice**



Bend over backward(s)

to try very hard to help or please someone, even though it causes you trouble

- We **bend over backwards** to make them feel welcome and they didn't thank us once.
- I've built an entire team made up of people who, just like my dad, will **bend over backwards** to delight you.

Be there for someone

if you are there for someone, you are ready to listen to their problems and to help and support them

- Jimmy is a good friend. He's always **been there for me** when I needed help or advice.
- But while I'm working in full screen, Siri is **there for me** and helps me multitask.

Give and take

if you talk about give and take, you mean the way in which two people in a relationship accept that they cannot have everything that they want and that they must sometimes give the other person or group what they want

- All good partnerships involve a bit of **give and take**.
- It's an open exchange of ideas, an opportunity for **give and take**.

Keep your chin up

to stay cheerful during difficult times

- Richard was **keeping his chin up** yesterday despite losing his job.

Lend someone a hand

to help someone to do something

- If I'd known you were having trouble, I could have **lent you a hand**.

Help and encouragement



Hold someone's hand

if you hold someone's hand in an unfamiliar or difficult situation, you help and support them

- Tony will **hold your hand** through the sale, deal with offers and advise on any problems.
- You're there for them, you **hold their hand**, you answer their questions.

In the same boat

if two or more people are in the same boat, they are in the same unpleasant or difficult situation

- Don't worry if you are going bald. 40 percent of men under 35 are **in the same boat**.
- And many of you people are **in the same boat**. Very important. So, let's get it done.

Fill in the blanks.

The chickens are



Help and encouragement



The chickens are **in the same boat**.



Look the other way

to ignore something bad that is happening when you should be trying to stop it

- I know I didn't follow the rules, but can't you just **look the other way**?
- Bribe the police to **look the other way** and not send her back to North Korea.

Meet someone halfway

to accept some of a person's opinions or wishes, so that you can come to an agreement with them or have a better relationship with them

- The opposition is willing to **meet the president halfway** on his latest plans for the economy.
- And I thought it was my obligation to **meet him halfway**.

Put your heads together

to try to solve a problem together with other people

- If there's a problem, we all just sit down, **put our heads together** and figure it out.

Help and encouragement



A pat on the back

if you give someone a pat on the back, you thank them or praise them for something they have done

- The only reason she stays late at work is to receive **a pat on the back** from her boss.
- I thought the boss would **pat me on the back** and say, "Well done!" Instead, he fired me.
- You're the one who made all the sacrifices. You're the one who deserve **a pat on the back**.

Sing someone's praises

to praise someone highly

- Smith continued to **sing Tony's praises**. "He's so different, he's so natural", he said.
- I would point you to some people that are not usually those that often **sing praises of the President**.

Take someone under your wing

to praise someone highly

- She **took the little girl under her wing**, gave her advice and helped her prepare for the test.

A (tower/pillar) of strength

someone who gives you a lot of help or support during a difficult period of your life

- My daughter was **a tower of strength** for me when I was sick.
- You know, she's **a little tower of strength**. I really appreciate that about you.

Help and encouragement



Exercise 1

Complete the sentences with the words in the boxes.

over

up

together

in

on

under

1. I phoned to give you a pat _____ the back for saving the situation.
2. let's put our heads _____ and think of some people who could help.
3. As we're both _____ the same boat, it might be sensible to work together.
4. Most parents bend _____ backwards to treat their children equally.
5. Jane took us _____ her wing and showed us around.
6. I try to think positively and keep my chin _____.

Exercise 2

Choose the best answer to complete the sentences.

12

1. There is usually a fair amount of _____ and take in a trading relationship.
a) pat b) give c) hand
2. They want to negotiate and we're very willing to _____ them halfway.
a) meet b) bend c) hold
3. Hannah was happy to _____ a hand in practical ways if she could.
a) pat b) lend c) take
4. For most of the afternoon, mum had been _____ Cyril's praises.
a) giving b) putting c) singing
5. I Want to be _____ for my kids because my dad wasn't for me.
a) there b) together c) over
6. The government finds it easiest to _____ the other way regarding this issue.
a) look b) bend c) keep

12



Exercise 3

Reorder the phrases to make sentences.

1. Women candidates / **bends over backwards** / to attract / the party
2. learn that / girls and boys / **give and take** / three must be / in all relationships
3. **lend a hand** with / the whole family / the harvest / has to
4. they must / sensible decision / in order to reach a / **put their heads together**
5. for you / you know / **be there** / I'll always

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Exercise 4

Choose the correct answer.

1. If you take someone under your wing, do you (**ignore** / **help**) them?
2. If you keep your chin up, are you being (**cheerful** / **miserable**)?
3. If you give someone a pat on the back, should they be (**pleased** / **offended**)?
4. If you bend over backwards, are you (**ignoring** / **trying to help**) someone?
5. If someone lends you a hand, are (**you being helpful** / **they being helpful to you**)?
6. If you hold someone's hand in a difficult situation, do you (**need** / **give**) help?

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The Answer

Exercise 1

1. **on**
2. **together**
3. **in**
4. **over**
5. **under**
6. **up**

Exercise 2

1. **b**
2. **a**
3. **b**
4. **c**
5. **a**
6. **a**

Exercise 3

1. The party **bends over backwards** to attract women candidates.
2. In all relationships girls and boys learn that there must be **give and take**.
3. The whole family has to **lend a hand** with the harvest.
4. They must **put their heads together** in order to reach a sensible decision.
5. You know I'll always **be there** for you.

Exercise 4

1. **help**
2. **cheerful**
3. **pleased**
4. **trying to help**
5. **they being helpful to you**
6. **give**



Not your cup of tea

to don't feel very interested or passionate about something

- I've never been the greatest traveler. Sitting for hours on highways is **not really my cup of tea**.
- I don't have much time for TV. Books actually are **my cup of tea**. = I like them

Have an ax to grind

to have a strong opinion about something for personal selfish reasons

- The president denied that he **had an ax to grind** and he stressed that he represents all the people of the country.
- Our scientists **have no ax to grind**. They just want to save the planet.
- I've done my homework number 1. Number 2 I don't **have an axe to grind** with anybody.

In the picture

to get someone involved or informed about a situation

- Tell me everything, I want to be back **in the picture**.

Jump on the bandwagon

to join or follow something once it is successful or popular

- A: "I thought your mom hated that man."
B: "Well, he's the president now and very popular, so she decided to **jump on the bandwagon**."
- If everyone agrees with your opinion online more tend to **jump on the bandwagon**.

Involvement and interest



Keep a low profile

if you hold someone's hand in an unfamiliar or difficult situation, you help and support them

- It's hard for celebrities to **keep a low profile** when they go out in public.
- Where's General Kelly? Where is our General Kelly? He likes to **keep a low profile**. Look at him sitting in the back, but, boy, is he watching?

A labor of love

if you do something as a labor of love, you do it because you love it and enjoy it, not for money

- Katherine spends all of her free time knitting baby clothes for her friends. It must be **a labor of love**.
- It's actually hard-work making these videos, but I'm not complaining as it is **a labor of love**.
- I'm very proud of this book, it's been **a labor of love** for twenty years, updating it every year.

Fill in the blanks.

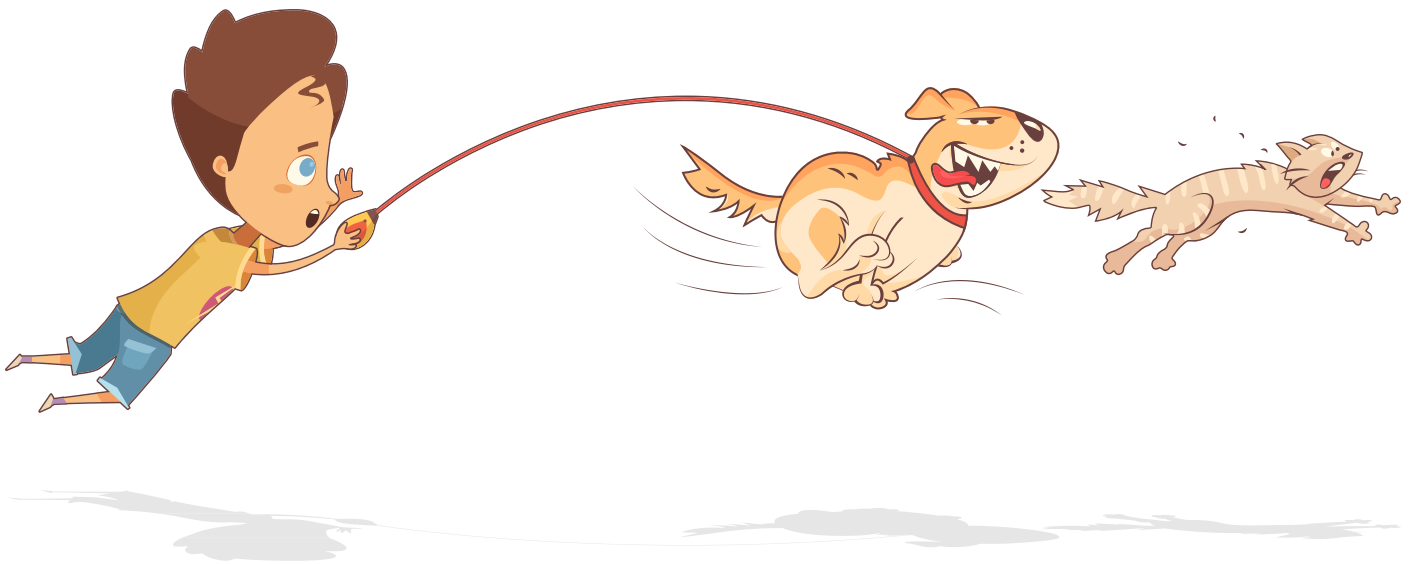
He decided that dog walking was just



Involvement and interest



He decided that dog walking was just **not his cup of tea**.



Mean business

to be serious

- One of them pointed a gun at me. I could see he **meant business**.
- Mom sounded like she **means business**, so you better clean your room.
- Iran knows we **mean business** and they'll behave better.

A nosey parker

A nosey parker is someone who wants to know too much about other people

- Olive is such **a nosey parker**! She likes to spy on her neighbors.

Involvement and interest



(Poke/stick) your nose into something **Keep your nose out of something**

to involve yourself in something that is not your business

- Don't **poke your nose into my business**. I don't need your help.
- Nancy **keeps her nose out of everybody's business**. That's what I like most about her.
- So, this has to be one of the best jobs in the world. Mostly, I have the freedom to **poke my nose into almost everything** and learn.

Steer clear of something

to avoid someone or something on purpose

- If you have dry skin, you should **steer clear of soap**.
- Try to **steer clear of the boss** today, he is yelling at everyone he sees.
- It seems like every time we get near change; we **steer clear of change**.

Try your hand at something

to try something new or try something for the first time

- I need a new hobby. Maybe I'll **try my hand at painting**!
- I told my teacher, who was himself a translator, that I wanted to **try my hand at translation**.

Involvement and interest



Up to your ears

if you are up to your ears in work or in an unpleasant situation, you are very busy with it or are deeply involved in it

- There's no way I can take a vacation right now, I'm **up to my ears** in work.
- Sorry guys, I can't come out this evening. I'm **up to my ears** in homework.

Whet someone's appetite

if something whets your appetite for a specific thing, it makes you want it. It creates the desire and the interest in you.

- The first chapter of that book really **whetted my appetite**. I'm looking forward to reading more of it tonight.
- I can only hope I've **whet your appetite** to go out and see and learn more.

Your heart isn't in something

if your heart isn't in something you are doing, you are not passionate about it. You are not very interested in it

- She was a good teacher, popular with her students, but **her heart wasn't in it**.

Involvement and interest



Exercise 1

Choose the best answer to complete the sentences.

1. Come to our arts and crafts evening and try your ____ at something different.
a) nose b) heart c) hand
2. Don't stick your ____ into matters that don't concern you.
a) ears b) nose c) hand
3. Everyone stayed late yesterday – we're up to our ____ in work at the office.
a) hearts b) ears c) noses
4. The rebuilding of the old factory was a real labor of ____.
a) love b) heart c) business
5. The new committee at the sports club are making lots of changes and they really mean ____!
a) heart b) labor c) business
6. We believe that the judge is fair and has no ____ to grind.
a) ax b) bandwagon c) appetite

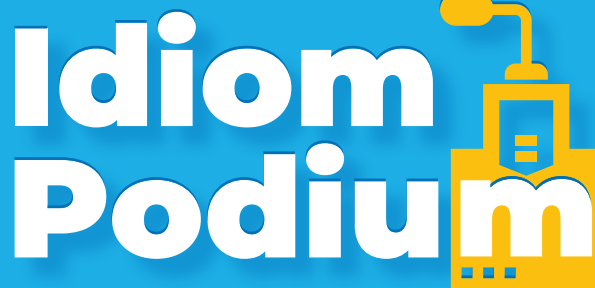
Exercise 2

Match sentence halves 1–6 with A–F to make complete sentences.

12

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. It looks as though more and more companies... | A. ...wasn't in the picture at all. |
| 2. I knew Karate and had... | B. ...my heart wasn't in it. |
| 3. I congratulated the winners but... | C. ...the ability to steer clear of danger. |
| 4. I never wanted to be famous and I like... | D. ...will soon be jumping on the bandwagon. |
| 5. He has decided that art history... | E. ...to keep a low profile. |
| 6. He spoke as if I had nothing to do with it, as if I... | F. ...is not his cup of tea. |

12



Decide if the following sentences are true (✓) or false (×).

- ## Exercise 4

12

- 48

12



The Answer

Exercise 1

1. **c**
2. **b**
3. **b**
4. **a**
5. **c**
6. **a**

Exercise 2

1. **D**
2. **C**
3. **B**
4. **E**
5. **F**
6. **A**

Exercise 3

1. **true**
2. **false**
3. **false**
4. **true**
5. **true**
6. **false**

Exercise 4

1. **b**
2. **a**
3. **a**
4. **b**
5. **a**
6. **b**